



Serving Children and Families Since 1852

ST. FRANCIS HOME FOR CHILDREN, INC.

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**TESTIMONY OF JILLIAN CARROLL, PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER AT ST. FRANCIS HOME FOR
CHILDREN,
NEW HAVEN, CT**

Main Campus Programs:

Therapeutic Preschool

Community Life Skills

Girl's CARE

FWSN Center

Jimmy Miller Center Programs:

Family Support Center

Boy's CARE

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New Haven, CT 06519

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**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. NO. 6386 AN ACT DELAYING
IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF
JUVENILE JURISDICTION
AND IN SUPPORT OF EXPANSION OF FAMILY SUPPORT
CENTERS**

MARCH 4, 2009

Good afternoon, my name is Jillian Carroll; I am the Program Director of the New Haven Family Support Center at St. Francis Home for Children. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about an issue that I am very - passionate about. I am very pleased to be here before you today to speak against Bill 6386.

Since October 2007, the New Haven Family Support Center has provided services to over a hundred youth and families in the New Haven area. As the Program Director, numbers and concrete outcomes are a very important part of my job. However, I truly believe it is the clients and their personal success stories that make me proud of what I do.

The youth that we serve do not belong in front of a judge or in a probation office. The majority of our youth are not delinquents or criminals. They are in need of help, guidance, and services that are made possible through legislative support. Unfortunately though, I often see how they are overlooked by too many systems and stereotyped as the troubled kids who are truant, beyond control, disrespectful and considered to be beyond help. I am here today to testify that they are not. The youth we serve are simply in need of support and services to become a productive and successful part of our community.

I am aware that many within the system felt that when the new F.W.S.N law passed, that the youth would be less likely to make positive changes without the consequence of detention and court involvement over their heads. After

more than a year of operation at the New Haven Family Support Center, I can assure you that is not the case. One of the most significant characteristics of the youth and families we serve is that when offered the support they need, they are highly motivated and have demonstrated the ability and willingness to make positive changes.

This positive outcome is in my opinion the direct result of the intensive case management approach provided to our clients. This includes meeting and checking in with them three or more times per week, monitoring their attendance at school, providing tutoring and therapeutic groups, and providing on-call and emergency support. We have the ability to offer the youth referred to us ongoing services when they stumble and we are there for them with support they need to get back on the right track. This level of intensive support cannot be provided by the court system. I have seen first-hand how effective our programming is in keeping our youth out of trouble, on the track to their success, and diverting them from court involvement.

I often wonder what the long term impact will be on the youth that don't have the treatment and support that they need. Over the past week, the local news has reported stories of violent crimes committed by minors. I can't help but wonder- if those youth were provided with the services and early interventions we have spoken of today before engaging in criminal activity could these tragedies have been prevented?

You will hear from Harry Vasquez today, who is one of our many success stories at the New Haven Family Support Center. He can testify how The New Haven Family Support Center provides a welcoming and safe environment and supported him in making positive changes. While you hear about Harry's success, I strongly urge you to consider the hundreds of youth who do not have the support they need, who do not feel safe in their own neighborhood, and who have to overcome insurmountable obstacles just to survive.

Our goal at The Family Support Center is to be a part of the community and a place that can offer support and guidance when our youth and families need it the most. Every youth wants to be given the opportunity to do well. Therapeutically, often the most powerful tool is when the desire for change is nurtured and given the opportunity to develop.

Currently, there are 122 cities in the State of Connecticut that do not have access to a Family Support Center or the services we provide. If there is a delay in the opening of additional Family Support Centers, countless youth and their families will needlessly suffer without the proactive interventions they require. Even more families will miss out on the positive benefits of the Family Support Centers if Raise the Age is implemented and there are not enough Family Support Centers to serve the additional FWSNs.

Again, I would like to thank you, for giving me the opportunity to discuss this legislation with the Committee and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.